



On the Ground

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Happy New Year

Welcome to the second edition of On the Ground, a bi-monthly publication for the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission to share ideas, information, and other items of interest. Previous editions may be accessed on the ISCC website at www.scc.idaho.gov.

This month includes several updates and deadlines to put on your calendars, including a summary of election deadlines and grant funding deadlines. Two stories from the Magic Valley are being featured, including an RCRDP training and 319 project from the Burley area.

As always, please contact us with any feedback or suggestions for future editions. Hope this new year finds everyone in good health, good spirits, and good company!

Commission Meetings

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at the DoubleTree Riverside in Boise, Idaho. The Commissioners will be setting the 2010 meeting dates at that time.

The meeting follows the Idaho Ag Summit on Monday, February 8th, also being held at the DoubleTree. The meeting is preceded that morning by the Senate Ag Committee and confirmation hearing of Commission member Dick Bronson, then followed up by the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission's budget hearing with the Joint Finance-Appropriation Committee (JFAC) on Wednesday, February 10th at 8:00 a.m. at the Capitol building.

NRCS Deadlines

Looking to do more conservation work on your land? Whether you're interested in improving irrigation efficiency, protecting water quality, reducing wind or water erosion, and more, chances are the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a program that can provide you technical and financial assistance.

Clint Evans, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Farm Bill Programs, says the NRCS administers a suite of conservation programs designed to address various natural resource issues on private and Tribal

working land and private, non-industrial forest land. Producers can apply anytime for the programs, however Idaho NRCS sets an application cut-off date in order to evaluate and rank applications for 2010 funding. February 12 is the due date for applications for these programs:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

For any of these programs, producers must apply conservation practices to resolve identified resource concerns on their land.

Evans encourages interested agricultural producers to contact their local USDA Service Center office or check the agency's web site at www.id.nrcs.usda.gov for more information on the programs.

Submitted by Alexis Collins
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Dick Bronson

Commissioner's Corner

Governor C. L. "Butch" Otter appointed me on August 19, 2009 to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission. I was honored by this appointment and the sponsorship received from the districts within Division 3, Payette County Commissioners, and other individuals throughout the state.

It is a challenging time to be involved with the Conservation Partnership due to the Legislative Interim Committee, budget problems of the state, and other issues. I believe that my business background and negotiation skills have prepared me well for this challenge.

The Bronson family has farmed in Payette since 1960 and our roots in agriculture go back several generations in Idaho. We owned and operated Growers Supply Co., Inc., an Idaho corporation located in Fruitland, Idaho. Grower's was an innovator in sprinkler irrigation founded in 1947. Sixty years in business quite a feat for small business.

My wife Marcy and I have been happily married for 37 years and have two children Jim and Carrisa. This partnership is the reason for our success.

Sara Schmidt, the staff, and

the Soil Conservation Commissioners excellent tutelage prepared me well and allowed for a smooth transition. The IASCD Conference allowed me to meet many new people and renew old friendships. Several good discussions were held and thanks to all for their input. I look forward to working with the soil conservation partnership in protecting Idaho soils and water.

*Submitted by Dick Bronson
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Goodbye and Good Luck

'Tis the season for colds, flu, and retirement. This month, we say goodbye to three long-term employees that have been recently struck with the retirement bug: Tony Bennett, Kent Foster, and Katie Slavin.

Tony's last day will be Friday, January 29, 2010. On the agenda for post-retirement plans are a lot of skiing, a little bit of traveling, and a nice honey-do list to attend to. If you have any suggestions for what

Tony can do with his free time, please call him before the 29th.

Please join us in wishing Tony the best and thanking him for all of his hard work and dedication to conservation over the years.

Also recently retired is Kent Foster, Executive Director for IASCD. Kent spent 14 years with IASCD and over 30 years with NRCS, which adds up to a whole lot of years of tiresome and dedicated conservation work for Idaho.

Please join us in wishing Kent the best of

luck with his new-found freedom and watch future editions for news on his upcoming retirement party.

Last, but not least, Katie Slavin announced her retirement effective February 2, 2010. Katie has spent the last 17 years working tirelessly as the Project Coordinator for the Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project, keeping the office moving and everyone in line.

Thank you to all for your hard work and best of luck in your new endeavors.

Congratulations

Effective November 2009, Justin Krajewski was named Eastern Idaho Program Manager for the Commission. Justin is responsible for all of the districts and Commission support staff in divisions four, five, and six.

Justin has been with the Commission since September 1998, first working as a Water

Quality Resource Conservationist, then leading the state as a Range and Riparian Specialist from November 2004 until his promotion in 2009.

Justin looks forward to the opportunity to serve the districts in this new capacity.

To reach Justin, call 208-237-4628 ext. 119 or email him at:

Justin.Krajewski@agri.idaho.gov



"I want YOU for conservation!"

Training Opportunities



The beginning of the year is a perfect time to ensure that all district supervisors and staff are up-to-date on the latest rules and laws that apply to conducting board meetings, dealing with public records, and the ethics of day-to-day business.

This last November at the 2009 IASCD Annual Conference in Boise, ISCC sponsored the Breakfast with the Chairman and invited Brian Kane, Assistant

Chief Deputy at the Office of the Attorney General, to provide an overview of three legal manuals published by the Office of the Attorney General.

The first, *Idaho Ethics in Government*, provides a complete overview of the three primary statutes governing ethics in government: the Bribery and Corrupt Influence Act; the Prohibition Against Contracts with Officers Act; and the Ethics in Government Act. These laws are intended to ensure that public offi-

cials remain public servants.

The second manual, *Idaho Open Meeting Law*, covers the government's obligation and the people's right under Idaho's Open Meeting Law. This law codifies a simple, but fundamental, Idaho value: The public's business ought to be done in public.

The third publication, *Idaho Public Records Law*, covers how to balance the competing interests of public access and an individual's right to privacy by exempting certain records from the disclosure requirement.

By ensuring all district supervisors and staff are properly trained to perform district business, liability can be minimized for all involved.

These manuals are available on the Attorney General's website at <http://www2.state.id.us/ag/manuals/index.htm> or you can call 208-334-2400 to request a hard copy for your office.

Submitted by Kristin Magruder
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Employment Practices Liability: Loss Prevention Checklist Personnel Policies

Well-written personnel policies that are properly followed can help employers defend against unemployment claims and other post-termination problems and employment-related lawsuits.

All policies and procedures should include every aspect of the employment relationship such as employer expectations, employee expectations, and administrative issues. The policies are not intended to be an employment contract, but rather to clearly define job requirements and rights of the employee.

Some topics to address include:

- Clear disclaimers of any promise of job security
- Employment "at-will" statement

should be clearly defined pursuant to Idaho law

Other suggestions for constructing a well-written policy include:

- Use clear and concise language
- Allow for flexibility and modification
- Include an acknowledgement form to be signed by the employee and kept in their personnel file

Additionally, as your workplace grows and evolves, periodically review and update your policies and have your employees sign a new acknowledgement for each new draft. Be alert of any changes in law that may affect any portion of your handbook and have it reviewed by an attorney.

While an employee handbook outlining personnel policies can assist in workforce

management, it cannot serve as a substitute for legal advice concerning employment matters. Rather, they are meant to help employers visualize and define certain policies and legal issues.

The district Professional Liability insurance policy through Darwin now offers a toll-free employer helpline to answer employment law questions. The relationship managers can be reached at 877-568-6655 or you can check out their online resource website at www.darwinhelpline.com.

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Conservation in Action: Marsh Creek

Marsh Creek, located in Cassia County, is a major tributary of the Snake River, entering the Milner Lake segment of the river just east of the city of Burley. Both water bodies are on the 303(d) list of impaired streams. The primary pollutants of concern in Marsh Creek are sediment, total phosphorous, and bacteria. Over the past four years, one of the major landowners, in cooperation with several agencies and organizations, has installed various best management practices (BMPs) to help restore wetland and riparian functions along Marsh Creek. This work has been partially funded by an EPA 319 grant sponsored by Ducks Unlimited, and additional work involving more land owners upstream of the original project area will be funded by a recently approved 319 grant sponsored by the East Cassia Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

In some areas Marsh Creek is highly incised, resulting in the stream channel being disconnected from the historic floodplain. In other areas, land use practices have adversely affected riparian areas to the extent that desirable riparian vegetation is absent. These conditions have greatly reduced the ability of floodplain wetlands and riparian areas to filter sediment and other pollutants from stream flows. The lack of riparian vegetation has contributed to severe stream bank erosion, which is responsible for high sediment loads. Wetland habitat for wildlife has also been negatively impacted by channel incision and degradation of riparian areas.

Practices installed to date include the following: water and sediment control basin (2); wetland creation (15 acres); wetland restoration (620 acres); upland wildlife habitat management (100 acres); channel bank vegetation (10,000 feet). Planned practices include the following: install 21,520 feet of fence; install three stream crossings and water gaps; complete two spring developments; construct six livestock watering facilities; install 11,560 feet of HDPE, PE, or PVC pipeline; protect 1,320 feet of streambank with rock barbs or rip rap and 2,344 feet of streambank with bioengineering structures; install 4 grade stabilization structures; construct two water and sediment control basins; build three water control structures; plant willows and other riparian species on 10,000 feet of streambank; create 45 acres of wetland.

The northern end of the Marsh Creek project area is located six miles south of the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge which supports over 100,000 ducks and geese and 500 tundra swans during the migration period. Many of the 28 species of waterfowl that use the refuge have also been observed using two existing reservoirs on Marsh Creek and 40 to 50 acres of existing natural wetlands within the project area. Restoration of wetlands and riparian areas will directly benefit many of these species.

Work that has been completed and implementation that is planned for the future has been a cooperative effort between the landowners and several agencies and organizations which include the following: Ducks Unlimited; Idaho Fish and Game; Idaho Department of Environmental Quality; Idaho Soil Conservation Commission; East Cassia SWCD; Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts; Natural Resources Conservation Service; US Fish and Wildlife Service; and Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Of special interest is the work done by a local BSA troop in September 2009. As part of an Eagle Scout project, a group of boy scouts, along with their parents and leaders collected seeds from wetland plants to be used for establishing wetland vegetation within the newly created shallow ponds. The seeds will be planted this spring by the landowner.

*Submitted by Carolyn Firth, ISCC Water Quality Resource Conservationist
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“We never know the worth of water till the well is dry.”

Thomas Fuller,
Gnomologia,
1732

Conservation in Action: Marsh Creek



Left: Incised, vertical, bare stream banks that will be treated in the future with money from new 319 grant.
Pictured from L to R: Alan Monek, Jordan Tollefson, and DEQ employee.

Right: Recently retired NRCS Wetland Plant Specialist, Chris Hoag, giving recommendations to a project site on how and what to plant in the new wetlands.



Left: Wetlands/pond that was built three years ago, now home for several migratory birds.

RCRDP Loan Program Training

On January 7th, 2010, Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program (RCRDP) loan program training was held in Jerome, with representatives from ISCC, IASCD, NRCS, and several Districts attending. A similar session was held in December in Pocatello.

The RCRDP loan program offers long-term, low interest financial assistance for the implementation of resource management projects such as improvement of riparian areas, improvement of fish and wildlife habitat, increased productivity of croplands, and conservation of soil and water.

Recent issues including the NRCS 1619 policy addressing applicant privacy issues under the Farm Bill Act and the upcoming modification of the loan application process were addressed along with program overview, program parameters, and the loan process.

If you are interested in RCRDP loan program training for your District or Division, please contact Dave Saxey to schedule.

Submitted by:

Dave Saxey, Loan Analyst

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Dave Saxey explaining the finer points of the loan program to participants

319 Grants—2011

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has announced the start of the 2011 Nonpoint Source Management §319 grants funding cycle. DEQ is recommending pre-applications as the first step of the grant process and the forms will be available online as of April 12, 2010 at <http://www.deq.idaho.gov/>

applications/319G_New. The pre-application period is from April 12 to May 9, 2010.

The project application period will close on Monday, August 2, 2010. Prior to submitting the application, the applicant and local DEQ personnel are to coordinate efforts to ensure the proposed project has been

brought before the local watershed advisory group for discussion and approval.

For more information, visit the DEQ website at http://www.deq.idaho.gov/water/data_reports/surface_water/nps/preapplication_announcement_10.pdf or call Dave Pisarski at 208-373-0502 or Dave.Pisarski@deq.idaho.gov.

2010 Division II Grazing Conference

The conference started with Dr. Kelly Crane presenting “Managing Dry land Pastures to Maximize Cattle Production”. The take home message was installing off-stream water enhances cattle production and pasture utilization. Cattle distribute over the pasture more effectively increasing utilization of forage with additional water. Additionally, weaning weights and total gains are increased – maximizing cattle production.

Ben Henson presented “Renewable Energy for Farm and Ranch”. He discussed various alternatives to generate power for water developments, fencing, or the whole ranch. Alternatives included solar,



wind, non-electric hydro and hydroelectric power.

Dr. Tim DelCurto presented “Beef Production Systems on Western Rangelands”. In his presentation he discussed patterns of distribution among cattle, and the benefits of cattle grazing on water quality and

bird populations. His research showed moderate grazing to benefit bird nesting and populations (83 birds/hectare versus 60 at the control with no grazing).

The program ended with the Producers perspective by Rhod McIntosh of Colfax, WA. He grazes cattle on his crop stubble and hayfields after harvest – gaining about 30% of his feed from these sources. The longer his grazing is extended, reducing feeding time, the more economical his operation.

For more information, please contact:

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Interim Committee Update

Idaho Soil Conservation Commission

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Now that the legislative session has started, there have been many requests for an update on state budgets and the interim committee.

BUDGET UPDATE

A link to the Governor's State of the State Address and additional information about the Governor's 2011 budget recommendations can be found at - <http://dfm.idaho.gov/cdfy2011/Index2011.htm>.

The Governor has recommended a "responsibly conservative" budget that calls for additional savings and for government to be more effective and efficient. As we understand it, there are two items related to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission:

1. Additional FY 2010 Holdback for all state agencies.

The Governor announced additional savings that will be needed this fiscal year for a total of \$40 million statewide. The understanding is that the SCC share of that will be \$28,500. The SCC will utilize personnel costs savings from unfilled vacancies to meet this holdback and avoid any furlough days, decreases in agreements, or district allocations.

2. FY 2011 Budget Recommendation as submitted/printed.

"The Governor recommends the reorganization of the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission. This proposal reflects the initial work of the Soil Conservation Commission Interim Committee. The Committee had not completed its recommendation at the time the budget was published. Provided the Committee presents a plan containing \$1.3 million in General Fund savings while preserving the on-the-ground work and resolving

questions surrounding the authority of ISDA with regards to ISCC, the Governor will revise his recommendation."

INTERIM COMMITTEE

The interim committee did meet on January 5th to consider draft legislation and hear additional testimony. During discussion, the interim committee delayed a decision on the authority of the Commission and its location in state government pending further discussions with the Governor's office.

The committee did reach consensus on a number of items related to the December 24th draft legislation, including changes to how commissioners are appointed (removing political affiliation, geographical representation, allowing districts to submit names to the Governor), making requirements for financial audits of conservation districts consistent with how all other entities are treated, removing the authority of the Commission to remove supervisors from their position, increasing base funding to \$8,500 with a cap of \$50,000 for any one district, maintaining current law requirements that RCRDP/WQPA applications are filed, and maintaining current law regarding the SCC as appropriate state agency for agricultural activities.

In addition, the Interim Committee is going to consider some incentives for voluntary consolidation of conservation districts.

Additional information about the Interim Committee can be found at:

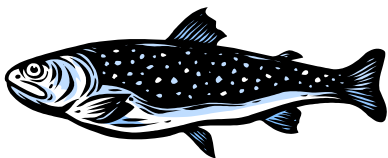
<http://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2009/interim/soil.htm>.

Additional information about committee hearing schedules, contact information and more about the legislature can be found at:

<http://legislature.idaho.gov/index.htm>.

For more information, please contact your local legislator or any SCC Commissioner.

Proposed Revision of Critical Habitat for Bull Trout



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to revise its 2005 designation of critical habitat for the bull trout. Bull trout depend on

cold, clear water and are excellent indicators of water quality. Once plentiful, bull trout are now found in less than half their historic range.

The new proposal identifies 32 critical habitat units on 3,500 water body segments across Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Nevada. In Idaho, this equates to 9,671 stream miles, 197,915 acres of lakes or reservoirs, 170 stream miles along the Snake River in Idaho/Oregon and 37 stream miles along the Snake River in Idaho/Washington.

A series of public informational meetings is schedule to enable people to learn about the proposal and to submit written comments. The following meetings are planned in Idaho:

- February 11, 2010 from 4-7:00 p.m. at the Red Lion Templins Inn, 414 E 1st St, Post Falls
- February 25, 2010 from 4-7:00 p.m. at the Boise Centre on the Grove, 850 W Front St, Boise

Immediately following the meeting in Boise, a public hearing will be held and anyone wishing to make oral comments for the record is encouraged to do so.

Please visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pressrel/10-02.html> for more information.

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